



# ELEMENTARY ANXIETY

## CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TRYING OUT FOR A TEAM. TAKING TESTS IN SCHOOL. MAKING NEW FRIENDS. Every kid will be faced with these common events in the elementary years and some will experience anxiety when they do. What may seem small to us, as parents, can feel overwhelming to a kid. While some kids are very verbal about their worries and fears, others need a little more observation from caring adults to see the non-verbal physical signs of anxiety such as stomachaches, extreme frustration and isolation.

## ENGAGE THEIR INTERESTS.

Knowing how to talk with your kid during these times can help them learn how to express and process their anxiety in healthy ways. Here are a few ideas of what to say and what not to say.

## WHAT TO SAY

- "I am here. You are safe."
- "Tell me about your day. (Or the practice, party, sleepover . . . whatever event immediately happened prior to the anxious behavior.)"
- "Tell me about your worry or what you're afraid of. Can you describe it? Draw it?"
- "Think about a time that made you feel happy—no worry, no fear, just happy. Would you like to tell me what you're thinking?"
- "God wants us to talk to Him when we're worried and afraid. Tell Him what you're thinking and how you feel. He loves you and wants to help."
- "Thank you for telling me how you feel. I will always try to help you as much as I can."

## WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "Stress is just a part of life."
- "There's nothing to be worried/scared about."
- "These are the reasons not to be scared/worried . . ."
- "Why are you anxious/afraid/stressed?" (Avoid "why" questions because they may not be able to articulate what is motivating their feelings.)
- "Don't worry. I can fix it." (Don't try and fix anything—just be present.)
- Nothing.

MAKE SURE TO INVOLVE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, AS NEEDED, AS WELL AS YOUR MINISTRY LEADER.